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A LITERARY

HISTORY OF THE BIBLE;

OR,

A Brief Account of its Original Languages, and of some of its important Versions.

BY THE

REV. ELIAS NASON, M. A.

Thy Word is truth. xvii. 17.

Sermo tuus veritas est. *Latin Vulgate.*

A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic, like the sun;
It gives a light to every age;—
It gives, but borrows none.

WILLIAM COWPER.

BOSTON:
D. LOTHROP AND COMPANY,
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REFORMERS OF THE 16th CENTURY

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INTRODUCTION.

OF all the existing literary monuments of the past, the Bible is the most ancient and the most venerable. The proudest works of men, kingdoms, cities, temples, palaces, have, by the ever-rolling tide of time, been swept away. The rocks and hills and seas are subject to perpetual change; one generation passeth, and another cometh; but the Bible has withstood the wear and tear of ages, and comes to us through the long, dark vista of the centuries, in all the strength and freshness of eternal prime.

So I believe with Pope in his fine Eclogue on the Messiah: —

> "The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay;
> Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away;
> But fixed his WORD; his saving power remains;
> Thy realm forever lasts; thy own MESSIAH reigns!"

In respect to intellectuality, ideality, and morality the Bible leads the world. As men or nations accept, believe, and follow its instructions, they become more

intelligent, more enterprising, and more manly. Hence, the history of the Bible is, to some extent, the history of civilization. For this reason, and because a new revision of the Bible is soon to be submitted to the people for acceptance or rejection, I have prepared the following brief account of the original languages, and of some of the most important versions of the sacred volume, which I hope may be of service to such persons as have not access to the larger works upon the subject.

HISTORY OF THE BIBLE.

I. The Books of the Ancients.

The word Bible means book; the book without a parallel. It comes from the Greek word *Βίβλος*, which, as the Latin word *liber*, at first meant the bark of a tree, then papyrus, or paper of which a book was made. A book in ancient times was something very different from a book in our day. Its leaves, sometimes a hundred feet in length, were rolled up into a cylinder. They were hence called "volumes;" that is, "rolled together." More than two thousand of these volumes were exhumed in making the excavations at Herculaneum, buried A. D. 79, by an eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, near Naples. They are about ten inches in length by three or four in diameter, and look like so many cylindrical blocks of charcoal. But many volumes of the ancients were much larger, and appeared more like a rolled-up window-curtain.

The letters, written with a pen or stylus, were all capitals. There were no spaces between the words, and no marks of punctuation. The words were written from right to left, and hence the books began where ours terminate.

The Bible contains in all sixty-six books, composed at different intervals, embracing a period of about seventeen hundred years. They were written originally in three different languages, and in several different countries. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Chaldaic, and for the following reason:—

II. Why the Bible was written in Hebrew.

Of the ancient languages, one, spoken extensively from the Mediterranean to the banks of the Euphrates, is called from Shem, a son of Noah, the Semitic. In the course of time this Semitic tongue was somewhat changed in its character, by the various peoples using it, just as the Latin tongue has been changed by the French, the Spanish, and the Italians. For example: the Latins called a man *homo*; but the French have changed this word to *homme*, the Spaniards to *hombre*, the Italians to *uomo*.

So the Semitic was changed by the respective peoples speaking it. In Palestine it became the Hebrew; in Syria the Syriac; in Chaldea the Chaldaic; and in Arabia the Arabic. The basis is, however, the same in all of them. These languages differ from our own in having but two tenses for the verb, in having in early times no written vowels, and in having but three letters in their primitive words.

Of this Semitic language but two dialects, the Arabic and Syriac, are at the present spoken. The Hebrew was a dead language long before the Christian era.

The first five books of the Bible, or the Pentateuch, which means "five books," were written by Moses, a Hebrew, on his way from Egypt towards Palestine, about sixteen hundred years prior to the birth of Jesus.

They were composed by a Hebrew, for the Hebrew people, and hence in the Hebrew language.

They were inscribed on skins of animals, or paper made of the bark of the papyrus, rolled up, as paper hangings, into scrolls, fastened with a string, and sealed. A copy was placed in the ark, or sacred chest, for preservation. This ark, or box, was costly. The top was inlaid with gold, and two cherubim wrought in gold surmounted it. The Hebrews guarded it with unceasing care, and bore it with them into battle.

For the space of about one thousand two hundred years, or about three times as long as our own land has been known to the Europeans, the Hebrew literature was enriched by the compositions of Job, Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon, and other historians, poets, and philosophers, exhibiting a fund of wisdom such as no other peoples of that period present.

Every Hebrew was obliged to copy these books with his own hand once during his life; the kings were required to do it twice, and to keep a copy of them "continually before their eyes."

Once, it is believed, every copy, save one, was lost. The antiquarian priest, Hilkiah, rummaging amongst the old rubbish of the temple, was so fortunate as to find the treasure, and then King Josiah took the copy and read to the assembled people "all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord." [2 Chronicles xxxiv. 30.]

Had not Hilkiah, as if by the merest accident, discovered this precious volume, the early history of mankind, perhaps, would have never reached us. On such contingencies momentous interests often hinge!

III. How some Passages in the Old Testament came to be written in Chaldaic.

But how came some parts of the Old Testament to be written in the Chaldaic language?

Well, about five hundred and eighty-four years before Christ the temple was destroyed, and the Hebrew nation led into captivity. The people were driven eastward to Chaldea, the capital of which was the celebrated city of Babylon, whose ruins, as those of Nineveh, now excite the wonder of the world.

Here they remained in servitude seventy years. The old men died; the young men learned the language of their captors, just as the Acadians learned the English after being taken captive by our forefathers.

Hence it was that Daniel, who stood high at the court of Babylon, wrote a part of his work in Chaldaic. Ezra, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah, who prophesied on the banks of the Euphrates, also wrote a section of their books in the same language, which, as we have seen, was akin to the Hebrew. From that time to this the Hebrew has not been a spoken language; and the only remains of it, except in some inscriptions, are retained within the covers of the Bible.

When the Jews came back to Palestine they had forgotten their native tongue, and the Bible had to be translated to the people by the learned. "They read," says Nehemiah [viii. 8], "in the book of the law of God, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."

IV The Canon of the Old Testament.

It was about this time that the canon [cane, or rule] of the Old Testament was made out. That is, all the books known to be of divine origin were collected into one volume, and the title Mikra, meaning Scripture, was applied to it. Ezra is believed to have been the editor of this first edition of the Hebrew Bible; he is thought also to have substituted the Hebrew letters in place of the more ancient Semitic. The whole number of books composing the canon was twenty-two, but by subdivisions and other changes they are now extended to thirty-nine books.

V. The Apocrypha.

In the interim between the time of Ezra and that of Christ many books, poetical, historical, and philosophical, such as Tobit, Judith, and Baruch, were written in Greek, which had begun to be spoken extensively in Western Asia and at Alexandria in Egypt.

A part of these books form what is called the Apocrypha [hidden], which is still printed in some editions of the Bible. But these we do not hold to be canonical. The Romanists, however, consider them of divine authority, and from them derive their notion of intercession for the dead

But Josephus, the great Hebrew historian [A. D. 37–95], says they had "innumerable books which contradict themselves; but only twenty-two which comprise the history of all times past, and are justly held to be credible. Five of these books proceed from Moses. . . . The prophets have recorded in thirteen books what happened in their time, and the other four books

contain songs of praise to God and rules of life for men."

This, therefore, makes up the twenty-two books which the Hebrews used in the time of Christ, and which before made up the Hebrew canon.

VI. Care in Copying the Hebrew Bible.

The Hebrew scribe took unwearied pains to copy the sacred word correctly. It was enjoined on him to use pure ink and to write only on the skin of a clean animal. Each skin was to contain the same number of columns, and every word was to be pronounced aloud prior to its being written. The pen was to be washed before writing the name of God, — would that we so reverenced it! — and the omission of a single letter destroyed the value of the whole book. They marked the middle word of the Bible, and went so far even as to record the number of times each letter of the alphabet occurred. Thus the letter Aleph, or A, occurs forty-two thousand three hundred and seventy-seven times; the letter Beth, or B, thirty-eight thousand two hundred and eighteen times, in the five books of Moses. It is owing to this remarkable care in copying that, of all the books that have come down to us from the ancients, the Hebrew Bible is the most perfect. Our trouble here is not so much with the Old, as with the New Testament.

VII. The Septuagint Version.

The first translation, or version of the Old Testament, was made into Greek at Alexandria, Egypt, about two hundred and eighty years anterior to the Christian era. It was done by seventy Hebrew scholars and hence it is called the Septuagint, — this being

the Greek word for seventy. Alexandria was the commercial emporium of the East, and had a library of seven hundred thousand volumes. One of the Egyptian kings, Ptolemy Philadelphus, desirous of enriching this library with a copy of the Hebrew Scriptures, sent an embassy to Jerusalem to obtain it, and had it translated into Greek for the use of the Jews then resident in the capital of his kingdom. The translation is not very accurately made; but it was, nevertheless, used by our Saviour and the apostles, showing us thereby that it is the spirit, rather than the letter, by which we are to be guided. [2 Cor. iii. 6.]

The Hebrew Scriptures were subsequently translated into the Chaldaic language and are called the Targums; and also into the Syriac language. Both versions have come down to us, and, as other translations, assist us in determining the sense of the original Hebrew.

VIII. Why Translations Differ.

Though all translations of the Bible differ as to many points, still these differences are not in general of very great importance. Even the very poorest translation is sufficient to teach us our duty to God and to our fellow-men.

"But why," it might be asked, "do they so vary from each other and from the original?"

I answer: It arises from the different way men look at things. Take the Latin phrase "Quid agunt?" — "what are they doing?" One person might translate it, "They are doing what?" Another, "What are they performing?" Another, "What are they engaged in?" and still another, "What are they about?" Still the sense would be essentially the same in all. No

two persons would translate the Lord's Prayer alike; yet the meaning might in either case be correctly given.

IX. The New Testament. Why Written in Greek.

The New Testament comes to us in Greek, and the question naturally arises: "Why was it written in this language? Its authors were Hebrews, why, then, did they write in Greek?"

It will be remembered that the Chaldeans on the east of Palestine, and the Syrians on the north, spoke languages similar to each other, and to the Hebrew; and that all sprang from a common source, the Semitic; and, also, that when the Hebrews went to Babylon, they learned the language of their conquerors, that is, the Chaldaic, in which Daniel partly wrote his book.

Not long after the captivity, Alexander the Great [B. C. 356–323] conquered most of Asia, and introduced into the subjugated nations his own tongue, that is, the Greek. His successors, the Seleucidae, lived at Antioch, in Syria, and long held Palestine in subjection. Hence the Hebrews, who had already, while in captivity, learned to speak the Chaldaic, now came to use a mixed dialect, derived partly from Chaldea and partly from Syria, and hence called the Syro-Chaldaic. But the learned in Palestine spoke imperfectly the Greek, for it was then the court language, as the French is in our day.

But fifty-nine years before the birth of Christ, Palestine came into the power of the Romans, who introduced, to some extent, the Latin language.

So from the political history, as well as from the literature of the Jews, we see that in the time of

Christ three languages, the Syro-Chaldaic, the Greek, and the Latin were spoken at Jerusalem, just as three languages, the French, the German, and the Italian, are at this day spoken at Geneva, Switzerland.

In common conversation Christ and his disciples spoke the Syro-Chaldaic. This is evident from such expressions as "talitha cumi," "ephatha," "anathema maranatha," and "eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani," which are of that language.

His examination before Pontius Pilate was in the Greek language, for this was the court language of the Romans in their provinces. The inscription on his cross was in Syro-Chaldaic (sometimes called Hebrew), Greek and Latin, in order that all the people passing might be able to read it.

But Christ used the Septuagint, or Greek version of the Old Testament in his teaching; his followers also quoted from it, and this shows that Greek was the leading tongue then spoken in Palestine. For this reason, and because the gospel was to be preached principally in countries speaking Greek, the New Testament, if we may except the Gospel of St. Matthew, was originally written in that language.

X. The Canon of the New Testament.

The New Testament consists of twenty-seven different books, by eight different authors, — Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, James, Jude, and Paul.

They wrote soon after the death of Jesus, in ordinary style, called Hellenistic Greek, and the earliest catalogue we have of their compositions was drawn up by the celebrated commentator Origen [A. D. 186–253], about two hundred years after our Saviour's death. It differs somewhat from our modern style of cata-

loguing books. He says: "The first of the evangelists who blew the trumpet was Matthew, then Mark, and then John. Peter blew it in two epistles; so, John and Jude. John began his blast anew with his epistle and the Apocalypse, and Luke with his Acts of the Apostles. Lastly, Paul drowned the sound of all the rest with his fourfold blast." [*Hug.*]

It is probable that Matthew wrote his gospel as early as A. D. 50, or 60, and in the Syro-Chaldaic language, which was soon translated into Greek, and that all the other books of the New Testament were written prior to the close of the first century of the Christian era.

XI. The Latin Vulgate [Editio Vulgata]. Other Versions.

On the downfall of Greece, one hundred and forty-six years before Christ, the Romans assumed dominion of the world, and the Latin language came gradually to be used, together with the Greek, in many of their provinces. The early Christians, struggling, as we should do, to extend the knowledge of salvation, felt the need of having the Bible translated into the Latin language. To this end, the learned St. Jerome [A. D. 291–420] repaired to Bethlehem, and there, from the original Hebrew of the Old Testament, and the Greek of the New Testament, he made, about A. D. 400, the well-known translation known as the Latin Vulgate [common], which, with the exception of the Psalms, translated earlier from the Septuagint, continues to be used by the Roman Catholic Church to the present time.

The language of the Vulgate is, in general, elevated and elegant. From it many of our theological terms,

as "mediation," "salvation," and "regeneration," are derived. For many centuries this was almost the only version used by the Western churches, and great has been its influence over almost all subsequent translations.

The Bible was translated into Gothic about A. D. 390; into Slavonic about 860; into Arabic in the tenth century, and by Martin Luther [1483–1546] into German in 1522, when the New Testament was published. The whole Bible did not appear till somewhat later. This translation fixed the usage of the German language, having done for that what the version of King James has done for our own tongue.

XII. The First English Translation. John Wycliffe.

The first translation of the Bible into English was made from the Latin Vulgate by the famous John Wycliffe [1324–1384], who was called "The Morning Star of the Reformation," and Nicholas De Hereford, and finished about 1388. A clamor was raised against Wycliffe for "laying the word of God more open to the laity, and even women, who can read, than it used to be to the most learned of the clergy, whereby the gospel jewell, the evangelical pearl, was thrown about and trodden under foot of swine."

The first two verses of the *Magnificat* [Luke i. 46, 47], in Wycliffe's translation, are: —

"And Marye seyde, My soul magnifieth the Lord. And my spiryt hath gladid in God myn helthe."

The price of one of these Bibles, written by hand, was more than £40, or equal to the wages of fourteen years' hard labor, as money then was valued. The labor of less than as many hours will buy a better

Bible now; and for this change we are indebted to the invention of the noble art of printing (about 1440), to whose custody the oracles of God were soon consigned.

The first book printed was the Latin Vulgate, about the year 1455, at Mentz, in Germany. The copies were multiplied so rapidly that the people said that John Faust had the devil to help him, and that he used for ink his own blood. A copy of the second edition [1462] I have had the pleasure of examining. The type is clear and distinct, but somewhat uneven; the illuminations are in red: hence the notion that the printer used his blood. This printing of the Latin Vulgate Bible by John Faust, or his son-in-law, John Gutenberg [1400–1468], marks one of the most important eras in the history of the civilization of the human race.

XIII. The First Printed English Bible. William Tyndale.

William Tyndale [1448–1536], the reformer and martyr, in 1525 brought out the first edition of the New Testament printed in the English language. He was a good scholar, and the translation was judiciously made.

The Lord's Prayer in this version is thus translated: "Oure Father which arte in heven, halowed be thy name. Let thy kingdom come. Thy wyll be fulfilled, as well in erth as hit ys in heven. Geve vs this daye oure dayly breade. And forgeve vs oure treaspases, even as we forgeve them which treaspas vs. Leede vs not into temptacion, but delyvre vs from yvell. Amen."

For this laudable work Tyndale was cast into prison, where, after lingering eighteen months, he was strangled, and then burned at the stake, October 6, 1586.

Such was the condition of things in England under King Henry VIII. Sir Thomas More, Chancellor of England, and author of "Utopia," adjudged that those suspected of having any copies of the Bible* in English, "should ride with their faces to the tails of their horses, with their papers on their heads, and their Bibles hung about their cloaks, and at the standard in Cheapside should throw them into the fire, and be fined at the king's pleasure." He himself was brought to the block, July 6, 1535.

But such a state of things could not long continue. The people had had a glimpse of Holy Writ in their native tongue, and it was beyond the power of mitre or of crown to keep it from them. The very means put forth for this served but to sharpen the appetite of the laity for the precious volume.

The version of Miles Coverdale [1488–1569], founded on that of Luther and the Latin Vulgate, appeared in 1535; the papal power soon fell in England, and then Thomas Cromwell, keeper of the privy seal, ordered that a book of the whole Bible, both the Latin and the English, should be provided and laid in the choir, "for every man that would, to look and read therein."

Such was the eagerness of the people to read the Bible that it was found necessary to chain it to the pillars of the churches. A load of hay was in one instance given for a few chapters of the epistles of St. Paul. Many people learned to read in their old age in order to enjoy the privilege of perusing the Bible in their mother-tongue.

The royal license was revoked in 1543, when it was ordered that every nobleman or gentleman might

* A copy of Tyndale's "Newe Testament," 1549, was recently sold in London for $57.50.

cause the Bible to be read to him in and about the house. Every merchant, who was a house-keeper, might also read it; but no woman, nor artificer, nor apprentice, nor journeyman, under the degree of yeoman, and no husbandman or laborer, might have that privilege. Under this prohibition people would conceal the Bible in unsuspected places, and read it in the recesses of the forest, or under lock and key by night. In this way fuel was continually added to the fire of the great English reformation.

An edition of the Bible by Thomas Matthews, but supposed to have been prepared by John Rogers, the martyr, appeared in 1537, and another by Richard Taverner in 1539. During this year Archbishop Cranmer's Bible was also printed, which became, until 1568, the authorized version of the English Church.*

XIV. The Genevan Version. The Bishops' Bible.

Henry VIII. died in 1547, and during the reign of his successor, Edward VI., the people had permission to read the word of God. This license was revoked by the atrocious Mary in 1558, when many of the reformers fled to Geneva. Here they printed in 1560 another translation of the Bible, known as the Genevan. It was highly esteemed by the Puritans, and many copies of it were brought to this country by the early settlers.

The Psalms, as versified by Sternhold and Hopkins, were often bound up with it. From a copy of this Bible, lying before me, published in quarto [1599], I transcribe one verse [Luke xxiv. 49].

* A copy of Cranmer's "Byble in English," [1541,] recently brought at a sale in London $250.

"And, beholde, I doe send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarie yee in the citie of Hierusalem untill ye be endued with power from on high."

The Bishops' Bible, so called because translated by several bishops, under the direction of Matthew Parker [1504–1575], Archbishop of Canterbury, and from which the Psalter of the English Prayer-Book was taken, appeared in a splendid folio in 1568. It was based on the version of Cranmer; but was never popular.

XV. The Authorized or King James' Version.

The version of the Bible we now use was made by forty-seven scholars under an order of King James I., and published in 1611. The translators were divided into companies of six each, and each man had that part of the Bible with the language of which he was most familiar assigned to him for translation. The whole was then carefully examined by every member of the entire body of translators, and before going to the press, by two divines from Oxford, two from Cambridge, and two from Westminster. The translators were three years in performing their task, and had the Bishops' Bible and Tyndale's version for their guide. The diction is simple, elevated, and close to the original. "The translators," said Dr. Adam Clarke, "have seized the very spirit and soul of the original, and expressed this almost everywhere with pathos and energy; they have not only made a standard translation, but have made their translation the standard of the English tongue." "Intense study of the Bible," said Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1830, "will keep any writer from being vulgar in point of style;" and I will add that whosoever believes the Bible and is

guided by it will develop all the points of manhood here, and come hereafter to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

XVI. Early Editions of the Bible in America. John Eliot, Christopher Saur, Robert Aitkin, and Isaiah Thomas.

The first edition of the Bible printed in America is the version made by Rev. John Eliot [1604–1690] into the Indian tongue. It is a work of great labor, and is said to have been all written with a single pen. It was printed at Cambridge, Mass., in 1663, and is now a literary curiosity commanding a remarkable price. The title is, in part, "Up Biblum God," and some of its words are very long and dissonant. One of them consists of thirty-two letters. It is this: "Num-mat-che-kod-tan-tam-oon-gan-un-no-nash," and signifies "our question."

Mr. Eliot published his version of the New Testament into the Indian language in 1661; the Indian and English tongues in parallel columns. Here is a part of it, and it came to me in this singular way: A mother who owned a copy of this Testament, lying on her death-bed, called her children to her side in order to present to them some little souvenir of her affection. An altercation then arose amongst them as to who should have the Indian Testament. "Bring me a knife!" said the sick woman. They brought her one, and she then, dividing the book into as many parts as there were children, gave one of these to each of them with her blessing. One of the children subsequently gave this part, the Gospel of St. John, to me.

The second Bible published in America was in German, and printed by Christopher Saur, at German-

town, Pa., in 1743. This Bible is very scarce, as many copies of it were destroyed for making cartridges during the Revolutionary War.

Robert Aitkin [1734–1802] printed the first American edition of the Bible in English at Philadelphia in 1782; and Isaiah Thomas, the second, in folio and quarto, at Worcester, in 1791. He also printed the first American edition of the Greek Testament in 1800, a copy of which I have. It was edited by Rev. Caleb Alexander, D. D. [1755–1828], of Mendon, Mass. An edition of Griesbach's Greek Testament, with various readings, was published at Cambridge, Mass., in two volumes, in 1809.

The first American edition of the Hebrew Bible was published in Philadelphia, after the text of E. Van der Hooght, in 1814; and, in the year following, the first American edition of the Bible in French was published.

The American Bible Society was founded in 1816, and has printed, without note or comment, and distributed, about thirty-eight millions of the Word of God.

XVII. The Bible Printed in Italian at Rome.

The Bible, or some part of it, has now been printed in about two hundred and fifty languages, and the signs of the times are that soon "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." [Is. xi. 9.] It is remarkable that the Bible in Italian was not printed at Rome, the pretended seat of religious power, until the year 1875. I happened to be present at the public exhibition of the first Italian Bible from the Roman press. The assembly was large, and speaker after speaker hailed most eloquently the

dawn of a better day for Italy. Then the beloved Father Gavazzi came in amidst loud cheering, and ascending the platform, poured forth such a torrent of eloquence in praise of God's word, as only those who have heard him in his native language can conceive.

Strange it is that men having this book, believing this book, can so pervert its meaning as to withhold it from the people. But the world is moving, and the eyes of men are opening.

XVIII. The New Revision of the Bible.

It is now two hundred and seventy years since King James' version of the Bible, as we call our own, was printed. During this period remarkable progress has been made in the study of the sacred languages. Geographical researches have been scientifically carried forward, and buried cities, such as Herculaneum, Pompeii, Nineveh, Troy, with surprising inscriptions, throwing light upon the sacred volume, have been exhumed.

Several old manuscripts of the Bible, or of parts of it in the original, — as the Greek Testament of Tischendorf, — have been discovered. Hence it has been thought that a new translation, or revision, was demanded. It has, by high authority, been made. The New Testament is already printed, and a part of the edition is now lying under lock and key in New York awaiting orders for distribution. In general, it accords with our present version, and the changes made are such as relate more to the form than to the sense.

XIX. Conclusion.

I will only add, in the words of the great scholar Sir William Jones: "This volume, independently of

its divine origin, contains more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, more pure morality, more important history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence, than could be collected from all other books of whatever age or language!"

Let us, then, read and revere the Bible, make it our daily companion, hide its celestial teachings in our hearts, imitate its bright examples, accept its earnest invitations to be saved from sin by the Redeemer, rest upon its precious promises, and adore its glorious giver, God!

BOSTON STEREOTYPE FOUNDRY.

THE PRESENT REVISION.

In view of the wide interest manifested in the New Revised Edition of the New Testament, a few words of explanation may conduce to a better understanding of the causes which led to it, and the character of the completed work.

The current version of the Scriptures, commonly known as the "authorized," has, with the Greek text on which it is founded, attained a sort of independent existence. For many generations it has been accepted as the true original, and the accurate translation, of the word of God. But, the advance of learning, discovery, and philological research since 1611, in all departments of biblical investigation, has kept pace with the onward movement of other arts and sciences. The translators of that magnificient version then "authorized to be read in the churches" had few and imperfect tools as compared with those which two hundred and seventy years have gathered out of the treasure-house of the past, and placed at the disposal of the present Revision Committee. At that time Hebrew studies were in their infancy, and the entire science of *Semitic* philology was unknown. During the last twenty-five years, through the discovery of ancient Greek manuscripts, and much collateral matter, the preparation of a more perfect text has become not only possible, but a necessity. Every word, every letter, has been examined with scrupulous care; and, at last, our own English tongue has become comparatively fixed and immovable. A living, growing tongue experiences con-

stant variation, and, in the progress of time, casts off once familiar words. To ignore this fact is to render certain portions of the Bible unintelligible.

The assaults of gainsayers and enemies could not be successfully resisted. It was discouraging to the labor of the teacher to explain what, after all, formed no part of the inspired volume, and mortifying to the preacher to learn that the text upon which he had been discoursing was mistakenly rendered. Thus, the duty of placing before the people a pure and unexceptionable text pressed more heavily upon those whose duty it is to teach the Scriptures (and the conviction has been of late years a growing one) that a revision must come. That it would be met by both hostility and alarm was inevitable. The merits of the "authorized" version had commended it to almost universal acceptance; it was a bond of union, a common ground of appeal, among those who differed materially from each other. Although it issued from the English Church it was no less prized by the different bodies of protestant Christians throughout the world.

The object and aim of the present work is not to make needless or reckless innovations, but to remove palpable errors and mistakes. Those who expect a new Bible will suffer disappointment; as will those who anticipate any modification of its doctrinal teaching. The marvel is, not that occasional changes are needed, but that, considering the period in which the "authorized version" was made, and the scanty helps then possessed, that the changes required are not more numerous and radical.

Reasons for a Revision.

The gradual change to which languages are subject, old words become obsolete or drop out of use. They, by being used in new senses, lose certain meanings and

acquire certain ambiguities which must be removed for the sake of the common reader. Thus, by a confusion of thought, much harm may be done to religion. It is not, however, the object of the Revision Committee to, in any sense, vulgarize the language into the colloquial terms of the nineteenth century, on the plea of rendering it more intelligible.

Another reason is found in the new helps in determining the text discovered since the authorized version was made. Numerous manuscripts, and, among them, some of the most ancient and perfect, have come to light. The skill of textual critics, the means for determining the true reading of a passage, and the wide and almost universal scholarship engaged, give assurance of a better result than has been possible at any other time.

These reasons, with many others that might be cited, have urged forward the work in the minds of all scholars until its actual inception in the year of 1870.

Origin and Organization of the Revision Committee.

This is the first international and interdenominational effort in the history of Bible translation. The authorized, and many older versions, issued from the heart of the undivided Church of England. The new revision had its origin in the Convocation of Canterbury, May 6, 1870, by the appointment of a "committee of eminent biblical scholars and dignitaries of the Church of England, with power to revise, for public use, the version of 1611, and to associate with themselves biblical scholars of other denominations using that version."

The English committee was divided into two companies, — one for the Old and one for the New Testaments, — and held its regular meetings in the Deanery of Westminster, London.

The American Committee was organized in 1871, by invitation of the British Revisers, and began work in Oct., 1872.

It was divided into two companies, and met once a month at the Bible House, in New York.

The British and American Committees are virtually one organization, with the same principles and objects.

Principles of Revision.

The principles of the revision, as adopted at the outset by both Committees, are the following: —

"1. To introduce as few alterations as possible into the text of the authorized version consistently with faithfulness.

(Faithfulness to the original, which is the first duty of a translator, requires a great many changes, though mostly of an unessential character.)

"2. To limit, as far as possible, the expression of such alterations to the language of the authorized or earlier versions.

(In a few cases it has been found best to introduce new words in the place of obsolete or obscure ones.)

"3. Each Company to go twice over the portion to be revised, once provisionally, the second time finally.

"4. That the text to be adopted be that for which the evidence is decidedly preponderating; and that when the text so adopted differs from that from which the authorized version was made, the alteration be indicated in the margin.

"5. To make or retain no change in the text, on the second final revision by each Company, except two-thirds of those present approve of the same; but on the first revision to decide by simple majorities.

"6. In every case of proposed alteration that may have

given rise to discussion, to defer the voting thereon till the next meeting, whensoever the same shall be required by one-third of those present at the meeting, such intended vote to be announced in the notice for the next meeting.

"7. To revise the headings of chapters, pages, paragraphs, italics, and punctuation.

"8. To refer, on the part of each Company, when considered desirable, to divines, scholars, and literary men, whether at home or abroad, for their opinions."

The object of this enterprise is to adapt King James' version to the present state of the English language without changing the idiom and vocabulary, and to the present standard of biblical scholarship.

It is not the intention to furnish a new version, but a conservative revision. The new Bible reads like the old, and aims to be the best version possible, giving, in idiomatic English, the nearest possible equivalent to the original word of God.

English Revision Committee New Testament Company.

The Right Rev. Charles John Ellicott, d.d., Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol (Chairman), Palace, Gloucester.

The Right Rev. George Moberly, d.c.l., Bishop of Salisbury, Palace, Salisbury.

The Very Rev. Edward Henry Bickersteth, d.d., Prolocutor, Dean of Lichfield, Deanery, Lichfield.

The Very Rev. Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, d.d., Dean of Westminster, Deanery, Westminster.

The Very Rev. Robert Scott, d.d., Dean of Rochester, Deanery, Rochester.

The Very Rev. Joseph Williams Blakesley, b.d., Dean of Lincoln, Deanery, Lincoln.

The Most Rev. Richard Chenevix Trench, d.d., Archbishop of Dublin, Palace, Dublin.

The Right Rev. Joseph Barber Lightfoot, d.d., l.l.d., Bishop of Durham.

The Right Rev. Charles Wordsworth, d.c.l., Bishop of St. Andrew's, Bishopshall, St. Andrew's.

The Rev. Joseph Angus, d.d., President of the Baptist College, Regent's Park, London.

The Rev. David Brown, d.d., President of the Free Church College, Aberdeen.

The Rev. Fenton John Anthony Hort, d.d., Fellow of Emmanual College, Cambridge.

The Rev. William Gibson Humphry, Vicarage, St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, London, W.C.

The Rev. Benjamin Hall Kennedy, d.d., Canon of Ely and Regius Professor of Greek, The Elms, Cambridge.

The Ven. William Lee, d.d., Archdeacon of Dublin, Dublin.

The Rev. William Milligan, d.d., Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism, Aberdeen.

The Rev. William F. Moulton, d.d., Master of the Leys School, Cambridge.

The Rev. Samuel Newth, d.d., Principal of New College, Hampstead, London.

The Ven. Edwin Palmer, d.d., Archdeacon of Oxford, Christ Church, Oxford.

The Rev. Alexander Roberts, d.d., Professor of Humanity, St. Andrew's.

The Rev. Frederick Henry Ambrose Scrivener, ll.d., Prebendary, Hendon Vicarage, London, N.W.

The Rev. George Vance Smith, d.d., Parade, Carmarthen.

The Rev. Charles John Vaughan, d.d., Master of the Temple, The Temple, London, E.C.

The Rev. Brooke Foss Westcott, d.d., Canon of Peterborough and Regius Professor of Divinity, Trinity College, Cambridge.

The Rev. J. Troutbeck (Secretary), Dean's Yard, Westminster.

Note. — The English New Testament Company has lost, by death, the Right Rev. Dr. Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Winchester, d. 1873; the Very Rev. Dr. Henry Alford, Dean of Canterbury, d. 1871; the Rev. Dr. John Eadie, Professor of Biblical Literature in the United Presbyterian Church, Glasgow, d. 1876; and Mr. Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, ll.d. (who was prevented by ill health from taking any part in the work), d. 1875; and by resignation, the Rev. Dr. Charles Merivale, Dean of Ely.

(The Rev. F. C. Cook, Canon of Exeter, the Rev. Dr. E. B. Pusey, who were asked to join the O. T. Company, and the Rev. Dr. J. H. Newman, who was asked to join the N. T. Company, declined to serve.)

American Revision Committee New Testament Company.

Ex-President T. D. Woolsey, d.d., ll.d. (Chairman), New Haven, Conn.

Professor J. Henry Thayer, d.d. (Secretary), Theological Seminary, Andover, Mass.

Professor Ezra Abbot, d.d., ll.d., Divinity School, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

The Rev. J. K. Burr, d.d., Trenton, New Jersey.

President Thomas Chase, ll.d., Haverford College, Pa.

Chancellor Howard Crosby, d.d., ll.d., New York University, New York.

Professor Timothy Dwight, d.d., Divinity School of Yale College, New Haven, Conn.

Professor A. C. Kendrick, d.d., ll.d., University of Rochester, Rochester, N.Y.

The Right Rev. ALFRED LEE, D.D., Bishop of the Diocese of Deleware.

Professor MATTHEW B. RIDDLE, D.D., Theological Seminary, Hartford, Conn.

Professor PHILIP SCHAFF, D.D., LL.D., Union Theological Seminary, New York.

Professor CHARLES SHORT, LL.D. (Secretary), N.Y.

The Rev. E. A. WASHBURN, D.D., Calvary Church, N.Y.

NOTE.—The American New Testament Company has lost, by death, JAMES HADLEY, LL.D., Professor of Greek, Yale College, Conn. (who attended the first session), d. 1872; Professor HENRY BOYNTON SMITH, D.D., LL.D., Union Theological Seminary, New York (who attended one session, and resigned from ill health), d. 1877; Professor HORATIO B. HACKETT, D.D., LL.D., Theological Seminary, Rochester, N.Y., d. 1876; and Professor CHARLES HODGE, D.D., LL.D., Theological Seminary, Princeton, N.J. (who never attended the meetings, but corresponded with the Committee), d. 1878; and, by resignation, Rev. G. R. CROOKS, D.D., New York, and Rev. W. F. WARREN, D.D., Boston (who accepted the original appointment, but found it impossible to attend).

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